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TAGS: [MASS](#) [MARR](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [AL](#)  
SUBJECT: ALBANIA: GROWING DEMILITARIZATION EXPERTISE

REF: A) TIRANA 446, B) TIRANA 808

SUMMARY  
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1. (U) Albania in early December completed the destruction of over 2,700 metric tons of its largest munitions (over 3,000 sea mines, torpedoes and aerial bombs), some of which contained as much as 700 kg. of TNT. In July 2007, Albania became the first country to destroy its chemical weapons stockpile under the Chemical Weapons Convention, and the country is well on the road to eliminating its dangerous Cold War legacy of over 100,000 tons of conventional ammunition, MANPADS, and SA-2 rockets. Albania seeks USG assistance to finish the destruction of its surplus munitions. This would eliminate not only a significant danger and a proliferation risk, but would also sharpen Albania's expertise in weapons demilitarization, providing a niche capability to NATO. Defense Minister Mediu has also offered to give usable ammunition to aid ISAF/Coalition forces in Afghanistan and Iraq. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) Ministry of Defense (MOD) officials on December 12 celebrated the completion of Albania's Heavy Munitions Destruction Project (HMD), which destroyed over 2,700 metric tons of Albania's largest surplus munitions (over 3,000 sea mines, torpedoes, depth charges and aerial bombs). Ambassador Don Mahley, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of International Security and

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Non-Proliferation (ISN), traveled to Tirana for the awards ceremony and press conference. He praised the U.S. contractor SAIC, MOD explosive ordnance demolition (EOD) teams, and a group of retired Albanian military EOD experts (the National Demilitarization Center - NDC) for their close cooperation and adherence to safety standards. A/DAS Mahley noted that the project was completed under budget and ahead of schedule while observing strict NATO safety standards.

BACKGROUND  
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3. (U) In 2005, the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Fund (NDF) funded the USD 2.8 million HMD project. The obsolete and decaying naval munitions were stored in nine poorly-maintained sites along the coast, creating a serious safety risk in Albania's prime developing tourist areas with encroaching civilian housing and establishments. NDF attempted several tenders, but contractors' bids were based on explosive demolition and the MOD was unable to find a suitable range to blow up the munitions, some of which contained 700 kilograms of TNT. NDF changed the Statement of Work in late 2006 to require non-explosive demolition.

## SECOND MILESTONE

14. (U) Albania received world-wide attention in July 2007 when it became the first country to destroy its chemical weapons under the Chemical Weapons Convention, also with USG assistance (reftels). Ambassador Mahley, whose office also oversees the U.S. chemical weapon destruction program, praised the Albanians for their transparency and cooperation in declaring their chemical agents and said that Albania's example will be a model for any countries which will be making new chemical weapons declarations to the Organization for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

### MUCH MORE TO DO

15. (SBU) As an encore, Albania must choose what to destroy next: small-caliber ammunition, artillery and mortar ordnance, MANPADS or SA-2 rockets. With over 100,000 tons of surplus ordnance, destruction of these stocks will take time and be expensive. Minister Mediu told Ambassador Mahley that he will ask for additional USG help, particularly to destroy Albania's stockpile of old HM-5 MANPADS and decaying SA-2 missiles. Mediu also wants to give away ammunition useable for combat or training for use in Afghanistan and Iraq as an additional measure of Albania's support for military efforts in both countries. He asked for USG assistance to transport the ammunition, as well as to inventory and identify useable ammunition. (Note: Mediu asked Deputy Prime Minister Oketa to raise this topic with DOD officials during his recent visit to Washington.)

### NATO CAPABILITIES

16. (U) Responding to Allied suggestions that Albania deliver "niche capabilities" for use in NATO operations, the MOD has taken major

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steps to develop a modern, capable EOD organization while eliminating a significant danger to its population and reducing a proliferation risk. NDC has become a "reserve" for retired military EOD specialists, who, with their active duty counterparts, can offer technical services to other countries in the region. NDC and active duty EOD teams have been highly praised by several U.S. contractors for their knowledge, expertise, and attention to safety. In addition, Albania's three ammunition factories have been employed to disassemble some of the larger munitions and steam out the TNT, providing a safe means of demilitarization while employing Albanians.

### COMMENT

17. (SBU) Albania has made impressive EOD achievements, but finding future funding to build on these efforts will be difficult, now that the major WMD and proliferation risks are gone. Canada led the most recent effort through the NATO PfP trust fund, raising 6.2 million euros to destroy 11,600 metric tons of ammunition, but that program has now come to an end. NATO HQ Tirana Commander General Rintis has frequently urged Allies to support additional trust fund projects, so far without success. Ambassador Mahley suggested that the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program might be expanded to include conventional ammunition, which would provide additional USG funding. Post will continue to engage the Allies and urge them to support Albania's EOD efforts. End comment.

18. (U) Ambassador Mahley has cleared this cable.

WITHERS